

Managing Conflict Effectively

Conflict is inevitable among members of any group and can be a very positive experience if managed properly. These tips may be useful when managing difficult situations.

- Talk to your advisor or a mentor for guidance and suggestions.
- Decide when it is important to confront the other person. In some instances, it may not be worthwhile as the issue may not be important to you.
- Picture the situation as you would like it to be and how you see the conversation with the other person going. Visualize yourself dealing with the other person successfully and try to avoid imagining the worse possible outcome.
- Practice assertiveness. Focus on expressing how you feel in a way that is not aggressive.
- Step back and try to look objectively at the conflict. Don't deal with the issue when you are angry or emotional. In stepping back, put yourself in the other person's position and try to see the problem from his/her point of view.
- Focus on issues rather than personalities and try not to personalize the discussion. Remember to deal with one issue at a time.
- Be an active listener. While listening, do not think about what to reply in order to persuade. Active listening involves giving your full attention and paraphrasing or restating what the other says. Avoid rude, unintentional comments.
- Use neutral language. Try not to use words that provide judgment to others. Use "I" messages when speaking. Instead of "you never listen", say "I get frustrated when you don't listen to me."
- Don't insist on being right. Conflict resolution often has more than one right answer. Consider all options and make a compromise.
- Look for a way forward by jointly brainstorming possible solutions or alternatives. Encourage all those involved in the conflict to participate and share their ideas. Agree on an action plan.